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Directorate of Intelligence

## Science and Weapons Review

*Thursday  
6 August 1992*

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For Data Entry

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# Science and Weapons Review

A Publication of the  
Office of Scientific & Weapons Research

Thursday, 6 August 1992

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## CHINA: The 21 May Nuclear Test—A Multiple-Device Experiment? [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Chinese press reporting that two high-yield devices were detonated in last May's Lop Nur test. It is possible, however, that a lower-yield second or third device was involved; if so, this could indicate an advance in testing capability. [REDACTED]

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~~NOFORN NOCONTRACT~~

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9



6 August 1992

ii



CHINA

## The 21 May Nuclear Test—A Multiple-Device Experiment?

ACCORDING TO A Hong Kong *Cheng Ming* report quoting Deng Xiaoping, the nuclear test conducted at Lop Nur on 21 May 1992 was the most powerful underground nuclear explosion in the history of the Chinese military. This report also stated that "each of the two nuclear installations ignited at Lop Nur on 21 May was equivalent in power to 600,000 tons of TNT" and that "it was a new nuclear technology."

*Comment:*

If this was a multiple-device test, it would have been the first known test of this type in the Chinese program and could indicate an advance in testing capability. Obtaining good-quality diagnostic data from multiple devices is the major difficulty in conducting multiple tests in a single test shaft. It is unclear, however, why the Chinese would wish to test two identical-yield devices, given the cost and complexity of conducting multiple tests in the same shaft.